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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by the International Alliance of Women, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in
accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[14 February 2016]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).



BIRTH REGISTRATION, A Passport to Fundamental Rights

Birth Registration is the right that allows access to all other rights. Education, health care, social services, work, bank account, marriage, voting rights, citizenship, all become difficult when a person is not registered at birth.

Many international declarations and conventions establish the right of every one to be recognized as a person before the law (art 6 Declaration of Human Rights, art. 24.2 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights). Art.7

International Covenant on the rights of the child confirms the right to be registered immediately after birth, the right to a name, the right to a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents. Yet, according to UNICEF, in 2014 about 230 million children under 5 had not been registered.

That means that apart from not having access to the above mentioned fundamental rights, those children are prone to being abducted, sold or trafficked, to be recruited into rebel forces, being forced to marry or treated as a sex slave or being punished as an adult.

There are many reasons why children are not registered: discrimination of mothers, lack of adequate civil registration systems, poverty and lack of education. That is why it is so important that Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, has a target (16.9) that calls for:

‘by 2030 provide legal identity for all including birth registration.’

It is in every State’s interest to have a civil registration system. Without it the State can not plan for health and education, for food, work and housing for its citizens.

A very important aspect of birth registration is the way it opens to a Nationality.

Especially when children are born to a refugee mother, and the father is absent, or missing or dead, it is important to establish family ties in a birth certificate.

That way, when the child ever goes back to the State of its parents, it will be easier to prove the nationality of that State. This is even more important if the law of that State makes it impossible for a mother to pass on her nationality to her children.

There are 27 States who contrary to art. 9.2 of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) have laws that do not allow women to confer their nationality to their children. Among these States are Nepal and Syria, countries that suffer under the consequences of earthquake or internal strife, which leads to female headed families.

A future Human Rights Council resolution on the Rights of the Child should, in the opinion of IAW, refer to the link between Birth Registration, Statelessness and Discrimination against Women.